

The Honorable T.S. Ellis
United States District Court Judge
United States District Court for the
Eastern District of Virginia
401 Courthouse Square
Alexandria, Virginia 2231

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Daniel Farmer

Dear Judge Ellis –

This is a letter of attesting to the good character of Muneeb Akhter.

My name is Daniel Farmer, and I've been working professionally in computer science for over 25 years. During that time I've been the top security architect for four Fortune 500 companies (including the largest security company in the world), started my own company (which rose to 50 employees), testified about security to our US Congress and as an expert witness in federal courts, wrote a book and numerous articles on computer security, given many talks, classes, & seminars, been inducted into the Information Systems Security Association (ISSA) Hall of Fame, and am a Marine Corps veteran (0311/infantry in Desert Storm.)

I met Mr. Akhter and his brother while doing research in a DARPA¹ Program for cyber security. I was immediately struck by their collective intelligence, the ingenuity of their work, and was looking forward to seeing what they'd create in the future in what seemed to be an extraordinary start. I kept in contact with them as they started their own company, and was floored to find out that they had [] I'm well aware of the seriousness of Mr. Akhter's actions, and feel that our justice system will mete out a fair and just penalty for his crimes. That said []

In no fashion do I condone or agree with any of his actions – they were foolish, reckless, and criminal. It might seem striking that this young wunderkind – the youngest-ever graduate of George Mason University – could possibly go so far astray. But it's been my personal experience in dealing with many other brilliant young people is that while they can be wizards with computers they are often stupendously under-socialized, live in an isolated fashion on their computers, and often have a muted understanding as to the consequences of their actions from societal and legal standpoints. It simply takes them longer to learn some things.

Judge Ellis – I'm not asking for clemency, but I am asking for a modicum of mercy for this young man. He still has such promise to do positive, even great things in life that I feel it would be an even greater tragedy to keep him in prison for the majority of his remaining life. While no one can predict the future, studies have shown that white-collar criminals have a substantially lower recidivism rate than other criminal types, and I have faith that Mr. Akhter will be a positive force

¹ Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the emerging technologies research foil for our US military

in our society upon release. Indeed, from what I understand while in prison he's finally realized the gravity of his situation and has already started helping other prisoners attain a GED and learn about computers. I urge you to consider the minimum sentence – which is still several years in prison – for Mr. Akhter. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss anything.

Sincerely –

Dan Farmer